

WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

Beat the fatigue



Chronic fatigue syndrome, known as ME, is a debilitating illness that can have a devastating effect on daily life. As well as the fatigue and exhaustion, ME sufferers experience muscle pains, mood swings, poor concentration and digestive problems. No one knows the cause of the condition but it often follows an acute infection. Recovery can be slow but many people report success with alternative therapies. CLARE GARNER looks at three options for overcoming ME

YOGA

ANGELA STEVENS is a yoga teacher in Wadhurst, East Sussex, who runs specialist classes for ME sufferers

So many theories have been put forward about the suitability of exercise in treating ME. At one time sufferers were encouraged to work out in the gym to improve strength and to take up jogging to boost energy. Subsequent evidence showed such activities were not suitable, so all exercise became a no-no.

Yoga doesn't come under this exercise ban. One definition of yoga is that it is "action in inaction", implying that, although the body is sometimes held in a position for a few seconds or minutes without any apparent movement, many subtle effects occur.

Yoga is great for ME because it targets some of the main culprits of the illness. It improves the functioning of the hypothalamus gland, which governs the autonomic nervous system that becomes impaired by ME. It also encourages blood flow to the brain stem, which is limited in ME sufferers, and it alleviates the painful build-up of lactic acid in the muscles, which comes through lack of exercise.

Yoga teaches you to breathe efficiently. This is particularly relevant to ME as breath is our chief energy source. It also develops the power of your will - an important factor in recovering from ME - and promotes relaxation and sleep. For people confined to bed I have tapes describing minimal movements, correct breathing and visualisation techniques.

ME sufferers need a special group which does gentle yoga with modified postures. I set up the first such class after Fiona Agombar, a high-powered businesswoman suffering from ME, could not take the pace of a normal class. She has since written a book, *Beat Fatigue With Yoga* (£10.99, Thorsons), and there are 40 ME yoga classes around the country.

ME sufferers who do yoga say they feel more alive and energetic, suffer less pain and find their brain works better. The benefits are cumulative. In time, some find they can join a mainstream class.

● Angela charges £3.50 for an hour's class with a maximum of six pupils. Her tapes cost £7 each, with discounts for more than one. For your nearest ME yoga class, contact Angela on 01892 782865.

RAW FOOD DIET

KAREN KNOWLER is director of The Fresh Network (TFN) and author of *Feel-Good Food*

Eating a diet high in natural unprocessed food which is largely raw and vegetarian can help in the

recovery from ME. Such a diet can strengthen a weak immune system, which ME sufferers invariably have, and allow the body to heal itself.

The higher the percentage of raw foods in your diet, the greater your chances of turning the illness around because raw foods, when eaten in their natural organic state, are the most compatible with the human body. Switching to a raw food diet may sound daunting but it does not mean going without foods you love. There are raw alternatives to everything from pizza to pasta and what might seem like naughty desserts. You certainly aren't limited to fruits and vegetables. There are many different genres of raw food, including herbs, nuts, seeds, grains, spices, beans and pulses.

To prepare the food, you can make a good start with just a blender. A dehydrator helps mimic some cooked food so you can make cookies, bread and crackers without losing the enzymes.

By substantially reducing the amount of toxins entering the body, ME sufferers can expect dramatic improvements in their condition. For maximum success, however, they need to think about changing their lifestyle and attitude. The body needs as much assistance as it can get to cleanse, renew and strengthen itself. Fasting can also greatly assist recovery from ME because the body heals quickest when left to its own devices.

TFN provides support and resources to anyone interested in embarking on a raw food diet. It's also important to seek guidance from an experienced naturopath when making these dietary changes.

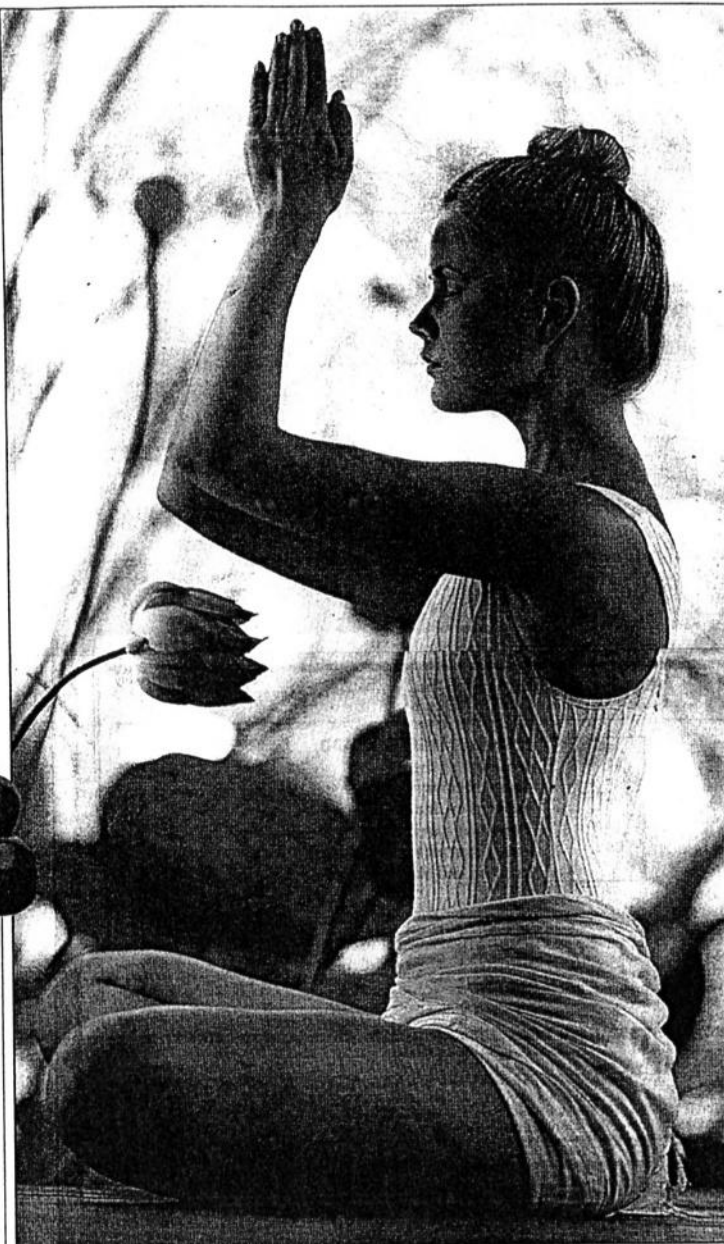
● Contact TFN on 0870 800 7070 or visit www.fresh-network.com. *Feel-Good Food* (£8.99, The Women's Press) is available by mail order from TFN. For a local naturopath contact the General Council and Register of Naturopaths on 01458 840 072/www.naturopathy.org.uk

BICOM RESONANCE THERAPY

PETER SMITH is a Bicom Resonance therapist at the Hale Clinic in central London

I encounter many high achievers in their 20s who have ME. They are overly-driven perfectionists who live on stress. Often they have pushy parents whose love is conditional on achievement. Their lifestyle compromises their immune system, leaving them unable to kick viruses.

A proper diagnosis of the condition is important because ME can be confused with chronic allergies, a yeast infection or an under-



active thyroid. Using the Bicom Resonance machine, I start by ruling out these conditions.

The machine, developed in Germany, is based on the idea that our cells and organs produce particular electromagnetic fields, as does everything we ingest. I attach electrodes to acupuncture points on fingers and toes and take readings. If I get an abnormal electrical measurement for, say, yeast, I give you a shot of the frequency of the antidote to yeast to identify whether you have an allergy.

Next I introduce the frequencies of the antidotes for viruses such as glandular fever, the herpes family and certain types of influenza. Once I've identified the offending virus or allergen I kill it by giving you a series of larger doses of the frequency of its antidote. For viruses I put the electrode over the thymus gland in the chest because it's intimately involved in the body's defence against viruses.

ME is a variable condition and the length of treatment depends on the individual but it's never quick. The minimum course of treatment would be monthly for between six months and a year but you'll know quite quickly if you respond to the treatment. If

we don't see improvement after three sessions, which is the case with about 10 per cent of people, I suggest another therapy might be more appropriate.

● Peter charges £140 for the first two-hour consultation and £70 thereafter. He can be contacted on 020 7636 2171, or visit www.regumed.com for a Bicom therapist in your area.

● You can order *Beat Fatigue With Yoga* (Thorsons, £10.99, p&p free, by sending a cheque or postal order to the Express Bookshop, PO Box 200, Falmouth TR11 4WJ or by calling 0870 366 6091.

